

*Abdi Ismail Samatar*

# Ethiopian Occupation and American Terror in Somalia<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

This essay assesses the nature and the objectives of the illegal Ethiopian invasion of Somalia and America's misguided support for it. America's war on terror has imposed a reign of terror on the Somali people which has destroyed a third of the Somali capital, killed 7000 people in the last ten months and displaced over half a million people from Mogadishu and surrounding areas. There are credible reports that the occupation has induced near famine conditions in several parts of the south and the so-called international community remains silent about the horrific plight of the Somali people. American and Ethiopian euphoria surrounding the defeat of the Union of Islamic Courts was short-lived as a fierce national resistance movement has reemerged. The long-term effects of these developments for Somalia and the region are foreboding. Paradoxically, it seems likely that Islam will play a greater not lesser role in the civic reconstruction of Somalia.

## Introduction

The United States-sponsored Security Council resolution, 1725,<sup>2</sup> to lift UN arms sanctions on Somalia and allow the military forces of the Intergovernmental Agency on Development (IGAD) member states to intervene in that country, ratified on December 6, 2006, became a prelude to the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia. America's pretext for pushing this resolution through the Security Council was that the "internationally legitimate" government of Somalia needed international military support since it was in danger of being overtaken by radical Muslims. The Islamic leaders, supported by the population, who drove out the warlords and restored peace to the

1 A slightly different version of the essay was published in the *Review of African Political Economy* (34, 111, 2007). Permission granted.

2 Somalia: Resolution 1725 (2006) adopted by the Security Council at its 5579th meeting on 6 Dec 2006 (S/RES/1725).

capital and surrounding areas, were branded as friends of terrorists or terrorists. Much like earlier US claims about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, the American accusation that Muslim leaders in the Somali capital have *links* with terrorists seems imagined, as no evidence has been produced thus far to substantiate the assertion. It seems that the United States has confounded the possible presence in Somalia of three individuals accused of terror with the Islamic movement. The American and its Ethiopian proxy's rhetoric of saving Somalia from terror was a new clarion call since neither of these governments came to the rescue of the Somali people when the warlords imposed a decade-long reign of terror on the population. Instead they tap-danced with warlords and continue to do so. Within two weeks after the resolution was passed the Ethiopian PM, whose forces already occupied much of the regions of Bay and Bakool pre-empted the intent of the resolution by invading Somalia with an estimated force of 20,000 well-equipped troops.<sup>3</sup> The African Union shamefully supported the Ethiopian invasion only to recant later, and the US and its allies blocked two attempts at the UN Security Council that called for immediate Ethiopian withdrawal. A day later the AU, Arab League, and IGAD all demanded a prompt Ethiopian pull-out from Somalia, but by then the die had been cast and Ethiopia ignored this plea since it had the backing of major Western powers.

This short essay narrates the pathway to the creation of the TFG, the Ethiopian role in its establishment, warlord terror in Somalia and the United States' support for them, the rise of the Islamic Courts and the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia. It also assesses the implications of the Ethiopian illegal occupation for the future of Somalia.

## The Road to invasion

The UN Security Council Resolution which authorized the deployment of a peace-keeping force, “[e]ndorses the specification in the IGAD Deployment Plan that those States that border Somalia would not deploy troops to Somalia,”<sup>4</sup> deliberately failed

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3 Reuters reported that the quick Ethiopian victory was not due to the efficiency of its war machine, but because of the extensive support it received from America and Britain. Accordingly, “The dramatic victory by Ethiopian troops was the culmination of months of preparation inside and outside Somalia by US and British Special Forces, and US –hired mercenaries. The ‘professional assistance’ was recruited by officials based in the US embassy in Nairobi at the end of 2005 as part of a deniable operation, sources said. ‘The brief was to enter Somali territory with the objective of studying the terrain, mapping and analysing landing sites and regrouping areas, and reporting on suitable entry and exit points,’ one source said. According to a CIA source, both American intelligence and its military have been bankrolling the Ethiopians since the start of last year, as well as providing them with satellite surveillance, technical, military and logistic support but even spare parts where needed, the source said. Although it was a goal of US policy to overthrow the Council of Islamic Courts, which had taken power in most of Somalia, ‘all the investment in the Ethiopians was ultimately to get to the three suspects,’ said the source. Hala Jaber and Michael Smith, Reuters, January 14, 2007.

4 Somalia: Resolution 1725 (2006) .

to acknowledge that Ethiopia already had over 20,000 troops in Somalia in breach of an earlier UN resolution. The Council's stand on this matter, in the context of long standing enmity between Somalia and Ethiopia (who fought two wars in the last forty years) and Meles Zenawi's declaration of war on Somalia virtually prepared the way for further Ethiopian aggression. The Security Council's willful avoidance of recognizing Ethiopian troops deep in Somali territory, its refusal to demand that the regime in Addis Ababa immediately evacuate its forces out of Somalia, and the resolution's unbalanced criticism of the Union of Islamic Courts made a mockery of justice and fair play. The Muslim leaders in the Somali capital warned the United Nations that the passage of the US-sponsored resolution will mean a declaration of war on their country given that the edict will formally legitimate an Ethiopian invasion of Somalia. These developments at the UN and the terrorist rhetoric in Washington completed America's demonization of the Islamic Courts, while ignoring warlord terror in Somalia, and primed the world for the eventual Ethiopian invasion of Somalia. The question is what compelled the US government to become partisan in regional and local conflicts and endorse the agenda of the Ethiopian regime that continues to use brutal violence against its own population; and what might this strategy mean for Somalia and America's long-term interest in the region? To answer these questions requires an understanding of recent events in the region.

Somalia has been stateless for nearly two decades and this has meant unimaginable suffering for the local population. Life conditions in the country were so abominable in the early 1990s that President Bush senior was moved to deploy American troops to rescue hundreds of thousands of Somalis from starvation. Operation Restore Hope saved tens of thousands of lives but was undermined by a vague mandate, poor advice, criminal warlords, and a new American president (Clinton) who did not have the nerve to take on the latter. The warlords murdered 18 American soldiers and desecrated their bodies in the streets of Mogadishu in 1993. When American troops withdrew from Somalia warlords triumphed and the people lost. Since 1995 Ethiopia illegally funneled weapons to the warlords, who turned Somalia into the worst humanitarian condition in the world. Meanwhile a dozen peace conferences were organized for Somalia but none led to the formation of a national government until 1999 when a conference sponsored by the Republic of Djibouti assisted Somali civil society groups to reach a compromise and form a Transitional National Government (TNG). The accord was made possible because the warlords were not allowed to dominate the gathering. The Somali government formed in Djibouti was broadly supported by the population. However, the TNG failed to deliver the peace and the services the population yearned for as its leaders were incompetent and driven by avarice while Ethiopia and its warlord allies also did everything to subvert it. Ethiopian effectiveness ultimately forced the TNG to accept a proposal which called for an IGAD-sponsored peace conference. Kenya and Ethiopia, who were the chief managers of the conference, allied themselves with the warlords. The convention ultimately produced, in 2004, a new warlord-dominated government beholden to Ethiopia.

Ethiopia's dominance was so complete that it was able to help appoint the president and nominate the Somali Prime Minister.<sup>5</sup>

Somalia's new warlord government refused to relocate to the Somali capital, Mogadishu, and languished in Nairobi until it was forced to resettle in the small Somali town of Jowhar, 90 km north of Mogadishu. Some warlord members of the government and nearly half of the MPs including the speaker of parliament moved to the capital and insisted the government shift its operations to Mogadishu. While this stalemate continued the warlords who controlled Jowhar severely limited the authority of the government by refusing to let it bring its sectarian militia to the town. This complicated roadblock was removed when the speaker and the president finally reached a deal in Yemen which led to the relocation of Government to Baidao. In the meantime, the US government's Central Intelligence Agency clandestinely<sup>6</sup> hired Mogadishu's notorious warlords to hunt down what it considered radical Muslim clerics who it claimed were sheltering terrorists. These hired guns began a violent campaign which virtually put every religious person at risk of being captured and handed over to the Americans or killed. As the CIA/warlord instigated violence increased, many of the religious men who managed local Islamic Courts began to organize in order to defend themselves. The public which had suffered under the terror of warlords for over a decade joined the campaign and defeated the warlords. Mogadishu was finally at peace and in the hands of one leadership and the port and airport both reopened, after a decade in which warlords held them closed, for national and international traffic. Citizens celebrated their newly found freedom and started enjoying complete freedom of movement, and unprecedented physical and material security.

The religious leaders who were united into the Union of Islamic Courts (UICs) announced their willingness to work with the warlord government in spite of its unsavory character and invited it to relocate to the capital. Further, the UICs declared their readiness to cooperate with the international community. Despite attempts by the UICs to reach out in good faith, the TFG leaders, taking their cue from Ethiopia, accused them of being Islamic terrorists. The US Government panicked and followed suit. Continued attempts by the Courts to reach out to the USA were ignored or dismissed and the American government, which had contempt for the warlord government began to speak about it as the internationally "legitimate" government of Somalia. Influenced by what former Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, Herman Cohen, called false Ethiopian intelligence, the US endorsed an Ethiopian initiated proposal to lift the UN arms sanction on Somalia and allow a military force from IGAD countries, excluding the so- called frontline states of Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti, to be deployed to ensure stability and advance the peace. This is the origin of the UN Security Council Resolution which was adopted on December 6, 2006.

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5 This was reported by senior members of the international community present during those events and confirmed by renegade members of parliament.

6 C. Bryson Hull, "US moves diplomat critical of Somali warlord aid," Nairobi, Reuters May 30, 2006.

America opportunistically switched its political stance and recognized the TFG not because the latter achieved anything worthy of respect for its people, but owing to the fact that the US government's regional proxy convinced American policy makers. Former American Ambassador to the UN, Bolton, noted that supporting the TFG is the only option open to advance reconciliation and secure peace. Unfortunately, the Ambassador and his superiors intentionally ignored the fact that this warlord regime is deeply corrupt and sectarian (and has members who took part in the killing of American troops in Mogadishu) and lacks the integrity to be able to lead the Somali people toward a sustainable peace. Further, the transitional Somali charter, which the Ambassador endorsed, is so divisive that it cannot provide a sound basis for establishing an inclusive and accountable system of government. All of sudden America became "seriously" interested in saving the "internationally legitimate" government, never mind that this government has no legitimacy from its own people. America's most recent support for the Ethiopian invasion and the TFG demonstrates beyond any doubt that the so-called war on terror is anti-civic and anti-Islamic in substance. The United States' brazen arrogance and ideological blindness has once more led to unnecessary war, the invasion of a Muslim country, and the imposition of yet another dictatorship on a Third World society.

## The invasion of Somalia

Three factors precipitated the war. First and foremost, false Ethiopian intelligence to the USA reinforced the latter's exaggerated suspicion of all Islamic movements, particularly in the context in which the US had already accused Islamic leaders in the Somali capital of harboring three individuals. Consequently, America's predisposition meant that Ethiopia was granted the green light to invade Somalia. US Government's claim that three individuals suspected of taking part in the bombing of American embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salam in the late 1990s were hiding in Mogadishu protected by the Islamic Courts made it an easy sell in the West. The Courts contested that they had no knowledge of the aforementioned individuals and invited the US to send investigators to examine the areas the courts control. This offer was rejected and subsequently the American government began to mirror the language of the Ethiopian regime that UICs is a terrorist front. Second, the Ethiopian regime's commitment to support its client, the TFG, entailed *initially* deploying over 10,000 of its troops in and around Baidoa in violation of the UN Security Council Arms Sanctions on Somalia. The confluence of American and Ethiopian interests was articulated in the diplomatic language of "protecting the internationally legitimate government of Somalia." This joint Ethiopian and American project was codified by the Security Council's adoption of an American-sponsored resolution to allow IGAD countries to send peace-keeping force to stabilize Somalia, completely ignoring that peace had been restored in the most troublesome regions of the country by the Is-

lamic Courts. The UICs interpreted the passage of the resolution as a declaration of war and an endorsement of the Ethiopian occupation. Finally, the Islamic Courts made strategic blunders by failing to organize the population and establish working administrations for the areas of the country it controlled. Further and more damagingly, it was not able to create a chain of command within the courts and consequently lacked a policy structure within which all members operated. This meant that different actors, principally on the military front, made decisions unilaterally without clearing it with the leadership. In particular, tactless statements were made, such as *jihad* against Ethiopia for invading Somalia, providing cannon fodder for the Ethiopian propaganda machine and other Western groups who distorted the substance of the declarations. Moreover, the military wing of the UICs took irresponsible actions that compromised the integrity of the Courts and which undermined the collective project. The haughtiness of these military elements was in part due to over-confidence generated by their quick success against the warlords, considerable public support for the UICs that came with the peace, and their articulation of nationalist ideas. In addition, they were grossly ignorant about the magnitude of the peril which the Somali cause faced. Thus, the chaotic internal organization of the UICs led from one major bungle to another forcing it into a strategically unnecessary confrontation with the Ethiopian forces buttressing the TFG. Ultimately, this gave the Ethiopian regime and its allies the pretext they had hoped for.

The lightly armed militias of the Courts were no match for the massive and heavily mechanized Ethiopian forces estimated at 20,000 soldiers, at the start of the war, and supported by American and British intelligence, mercenaries, and resources. Within a week of the formal start of the hostilities Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia was almost complete, and the Courts lost all the territories they had controlled and their leadership fled Mogadishu. Somalia's capital fell to the Ethiopian forces and the country came under full Ethiopian occupation.

Now that the Union of Islamic Courts does not control any part of the country, it is important to reflect on the significance of Ethiopian occupation of Somalia and the support of key Western states for the invasion. First and foremost, America's superciliousness towards the Islamic Courts is based on *analogy rather than analysis*. Some US officials have often said that the Talibans of Afghanistan, just like the Islamic Courts, also restored peace to the country only to turn it to a terrorist haven. The implication is that, given America's pre-emptive military strategy, the restoration of peace to Mogadishu and surrounding regions was considered a Trojan horse for anti-American Islam that must not be allowed to sail. This preemptive approach might be appropriate in a situation of *genuine* danger but Somalia did not pose such a menace to real American interests. The Courts have been willing to work with the international community and have written several letters to the UN and USA with a promise to cooperate. Further, they invited the US government and the UN to come and investigate the claim that three individuals accused of being responsible for bombing American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania were hiding in Mogadishu and sheltered by the Courts. Even if the Courts were not telling the truth about the three terrorists, the American administration and the UN should have called their bluff

and accepted the offer to investigate. It is possible this would have spared Somalia an Ethiopian invasion as well as the imposition of a warlord government. Instead of wanting to work with the courts to ensure that real terrorists (against Somalis and other populations) do not find a foothold in the region the US government has empowered America's regional proxy to have a free hand in Somalia with a promise of material and military support.<sup>7</sup> This was another American blunder in which a precious chance was lost to work with the most civic Somali force that was able to accomplish what the international community has been unable to do for 16 years: defeat warlord terrorists and restore peace to Mogadishu. Further, the material resources that will be spent on financing the seeming phantom AU force could have been used to help the country's reconstruction, particularly generating productive employment for the young men who have been the foot soldiers of the warlords and sectarian militias.

A second matter of significant note is the return of the warlords. As the Ethiopian troops advanced toward Mogadishu they were accompanied by warlord terrorists, who were defeated by the Courts, and the former allowed them to re-occupy their previous fiefdoms. More recently, some of the most brutal warlords have been appointed to senior positions, such as the mayor of Mogadishu and the head of the police. It seems that the invading power, which had a long tradition of creating parallel structures among its subjugated groups, seems to be using the same formula in Somalia. This old colonial strategy of using locals against one another by having people who are just outside the favored circle always looking in and who can be brought to the center if the administering clients do not behave in line with prescribed orders from the dominant class. These warlords will not have the power they wielded earlier but they will be kept in reserve for use if and when that is deemed necessary by the invading force. The leadership of the TFG and Western actors who have supported the Ethiopian invasion are either silent about the illegality of the occupation or continue to make excuses for it. Much of the silence of the so-called international community on the return of the warlords and the occupation is testimonial to the absurd nature of the anti-terror war as well the democratic pretensions they peddle.

Third, American support for the Ethiopian occupation confirms the view of many Somalis and others in the region (Muslims and non-Muslims) that US foreign policy is driven by arrogance and disregard for the interests and well-being of poor people. It demonstrates that the United States Government which was least interested in supporting the civic camp during the Kenya-based Somali negotiations, 2003-4, and which actively supported the warlords in its aftermath will never allow local people to solve their problems in ways that diverge from the imperial American view. Therefore, American policies in the region and this invasion will prolong the agony of the Somali people, having derailed their wish for freedom and national autonomy without warlord terrorists or tyrants who are clients of other states. Recent statements

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<sup>7</sup> A high level Ethiopian military officer told the author in Washington DC that his country is getting more resources from the USA than they have requested. More recently, the American Government announced that it will be granting Ethiopia \$75 million to that country's strategic importance. This grant is seen by many observers as a reward for Ethiopian occupation of Somalia.

from the US government indicating that various Somali factions should go back to the negotiating table and work out their differences peacefully is not only ironic and indeed condescending.<sup>8</sup> Given that martial law has been declared by the TFG one wonders how the Assistant Secretary thinks peaceful reconciliation will take place. In addition the introduction of martial law enforced by Ethiopian troops, as the TFG does not have its own forces, frontally destroyed whatever little grain of truth America's utterings might have had. This reveals that American authorities do not care about the fate of the Somali people and have been willfully dishonest since they cannot explain how their proposition of non-violent reconciliation could be possible given that Washington's ally has invaded the country in support of one faction and that others have been destroyed or intimidated and threatened. The subtext of this statement is that Somalis must now accept Ethiopian domination.

Fourth, the AU's claim that the American Resolution at the Security Council was an African project smacked of old imperial bosses letting their boys do the dirty work. What made it worse is how African Ambassadors at the UN Security Council and their government did not comprehend the nature of the Somali issues/problems nor cared to realize the implication of the votes for the Somali people and continent at large. Moreover, the AU endorsement of the Ethiopian invasion and then retracting its announcement two days later and now re-stating that the occupying Ethiopian troops are doing the work of the AU underscores the incompetence and disgrace of the continental organization.

Finally, neither the TFG nor its Ethiopian master is trusted by the Somali public. The TFG denied that Ethiopian troops had invaded Somalia even long after the Ethiopian government admitted having its troops in Somalia. Such false denials of known facts have undermined whatever credibility the TFG had. Further, the Ethiopian government initially justified its invasion of Somali territory in order to defend the Somali government from the Islamic militias. Then both the US and Ethiopian talked about the presence of 2,000 Eritrean troops in Somalia but no evidence has been produced yet to sustain this claim. Subsequently, the first pretext was dropped and a new alibi invented: the UICs and its terrorist allies were a menace to Ethiopia

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8 See the recent remarks by the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. "I had three primary objectives for this trip: mobilize international support to help build the governance capacity of the Transitional Federal Government Institutions; move forward with the deployment of an African stabilization force in Somalia; and encourage inclusive political dialogue between the Transitional Federal Institutions and other key Somali stakeholders... We have made clear that we see a role in the future of Somalia for all *who renounce violence and extremism*." One wonders if the Assistant Secretary understands that an invasion is a most violent act. Furthermore, the Secretary fails to indicate what every observer of the Somali scene knows – the incompetence of the leaders of the TFG and their sectarian project. She also fails to note that the Speaker of Parliament has been unable to go to Mogadishu under Ethiopian occupation. One wonders who the stakeholders are that she has in mind! Also what might the American Assistant Secretary say to the fact that martial law has been approved, by parliament under the guard of the Ethiopian troops, and has given Abdillahi Yusuf dictatorial authority in the country. How would such an act facilitate reconciliation? Moreover, Senior UNDP officers for Somalia, based in Nairobi, have told a delegation of civil society leader that they must work with the TFG if they want to have any assistance from that office. These developments indicate that there is a big push that everyone toes the line of the warlord regime, despite the latter's character.

that required preemptive action against Somalia and hence the offensive which started the week before Christmas. It is critical to remember that Somalia has had no army to be a credible danger to its neighbor for over 17 years. Although the Ethiopian Prime Minister stated that he intends to withdraw his forces from Somalia soon, he has contradicted that assertion by noting that Ethiopia has an outstanding interest and will not withdraw its forces until that mission is accomplished. What could that mission be? In addition, the President of TFG statement in Addis Ababa that Ethiopian forces will remain in Somalia to train his troops contradicts the PM's account and is similar to previous misinformation provided by the two sides. Most recently, the occupying force has compelled the TFG militias to hand over their weapons and now the former is the sole security authority in the capital. This last act is the final signature of the occupation and ensures that the TFG has no authority of its own other than what the commander of the Ethiopian forces will sanction.

## Somalia and the road ahead: cul de sac or possibly not!

What might the future hold now that Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia has dismantled the formal elements of the Islamic Courts? First, experience in Ethiopia under the hegemony of the Tigray People's Liberation Front since 1991 is pregnant with many lessons that can shed light on what can be anticipated in Somalia. Among the most important of these lessons is the way in which the occupying force establishes a charade democratic structure, handpicks local leaders, and holds them accountable to itself rather than the population. This has been the regime's political practice in Ethiopia<sup>9</sup> since it came to power, and the Tigray government has dealt with Somali warlords and regional leaders in the same fashion. Given this record, there is every reason to expect that the Tigray project in Somalia will sail along a similar course. Exactly what might be the contours of this course?

Second, the transitional Prime Minister, who was originally promoted into this position by the Ethiopian government, declared a day after he landed in Mogadishu on board an Ethiopian military helicopter that Ethiopian forces can stay in Somalia for as long as they want and the transitional president virtually reiterated the same stance.<sup>10</sup> A prolonged Ethiopian military presence will turn Somalia into an Ethiopian Bantustan ruled from Addis Ababa via a supplicant Somali authority in Mogadishu. The TFG will have limited autonomy from Addis Ababa on major national issues (even if Ethiopian forces are formally withdrawn) and therefore will not be able to earn respect and loyalty from the majority of the population. Warlords who have

9 See S. Pausewang, K. Tronvoll, and L. Aale. *Ethiopia since the Derg: A decade of Democratic Pretension and Performance* (London: Zed, 2002). A. I. Samatar, "Ethiopian federalism: Autonomy versus Control in the Somali Region," *Third World Quarterly* 25, 6 (2004): 1131-1154.

10 Associated Press, Dec 30, 2006.

been brought back to town by the Ethiopian army will have no autonomy and might disappear when their use to the occupying force is no longer needed.

Third, the occupying force will establish a security force that is controlled by Ethiopia and its handpicked Somali allies. This force will be the principle instrument of governing the country and it will be used against any Somali individual or political and social group that might have a different political agenda than Ethiopia and its clients. The politics of intimidation, fear, and violence has become the norm. A mark of what is to come is the harassment of religious people, the killing and mass imprisonment of Oromo refugees in southern Somalia who are considered to be supporters of the Oromo Liberation Front by the regime in Addis Ababa, the murder of several thousand Somalis since the start of the occupation, the destruction of a third of Mogadishu through indiscriminate shelling by the Ethiopian troops, and displacement of nearly a half million people from the Somali capital.

Fourth, the presence of Ethiopian forces has reinforced the authoritarian and venal behavior of the TFG leadership. For example, the President and Prime Minister continue to act as if they are the country's sole institutions by naming governors and heads of police without any process. The declaration of martial law on January 13, 2007 signaled that the march of the dictatorship is on. Such behaviors will *likely* lead to TFG attempting to extend its life beyond the remaining two years of its five-year term. If the international community and an organized Somali civic movement bring adequate pressure to bear on the TGF and their Ethiopian backer, the former will most likely set up a structure that nominally resembles a standard national election commission which will guarantee them victory (see the Ethiopian model).

Fifth, foreign consultants who have been appointed by the TFG (using EU money) and who are at work in Nairobi will produce a draft constitution which will institutionalize clanistic politics that will undermine whatever little civic potential the TFG had. Such a political and constitutional strategy will attempt to turn Somalis into social, cultural, and political strangers by reifying the very problems (i.e. politicized genealogy) that destroyed Somalia in the first place. Further, this strategy will turn public authority into a sectarian and instrumentalist operation and consequently government departments will become clan ghettos rather than national operations that serve all citizens equally. A most damaging recent example is the president appointing a relative of his to the governorship of Kismayo, the most *southern* city in the country and one that is contested by various genealogical groups. This action reconfirmed what the president articulated (captured on videotape) when he was the warlord of the *northeast* by claiming that Kismayo belongs to his genealogical group. Another clear foreboding of what is to come is the way in which the Prime Minister has behaved since he returned to Mogadishu. He has anchored himself among a clique of hangers-on, encircled by relatives, guarded by Ethiopian soldiers, and has failed to seriously engage a broad spectrum of Somalis in the capital let alone those beyond Mogadishu. This order will create conditions that are fertile for deep corruption which in turn will corrode national cohesion. The most visible manifestation of

such corruption is the recent struggle between the two principals of the TFG over money provided by the Saudi Arabian government<sup>11</sup>

Sixth, the executive leadership of the TFG lacks serious vision that can jumpstart reconciliation among Somalis. They have missed the opportunity to halt the hostilities once the Ethiopian army defeated the Courts in Mogadishu and much of the southern region of the country. In particular, they could have demanded that the Ethiopian army stop pursuing the last military vestiges of the Courts in the southernmost areas of the country and offer to solve the matter peacefully. Such an approach could have been a public relations coup for the TFG and would have signaled to the population that they may not be as obedient to the Ethiopian overlords as originally thought. The TFG's inability to see beyond its political subservience to Ethiopia indicates that the chances for peace through genuine reconciliation look grim.<sup>12</sup>

Seventh, continued leadership by the two principals of the TFG depends on Ethiopian support and the balkanization of the body politic. In addition, factionalism within the TFG driven by opportunism and Ethiopian manipulations will continue to bedevil its operations. The two leaders' unflinching belief in clanist politics will entail enshrining genealogical division in every facet of public affairs.<sup>13</sup> The combination of these forces will continue to be a source of political instability and bad governance.

The aforementioned possibilities are not preordained but are contingent on the duration of the Ethiopian occupation, the mood of the population and the strength of their resistance to the invasion, and whether the long-awaited AU force is deployed. Since the leaders of the TFG have already declared that the Ethiopian force can stay indefinitely, the only way things will change is if either pressure from the population and the resistance of the militants is sustained or an African force, with carefully crafted mandate, is deployed without further delay. So far the militant resistance, supported by the population, has forced the Ethiopians to bring more than 10,000 new soldiers into Mogadishu and surrounding areas. Only time will tell whether the presence of such forces will diminish the strength of the resistance, but Mogadishu remains divided into two segments, one controlled by the TFG and their Ethiopian allies and the other by the resistance movement.<sup>14</sup>

The most important challenge to the occupation could come from the possible deployment of an UN-mandated African Force. Uganda, which is most eager to lead the charge is more aligned with the America agenda and Ethiopia, and seems to be an ardent supporter of the TFG while the other countries have remained skeptical about the operation. If an African force that is politically neutral is not deployed soon, the Ethiopian military is already planning to create a Somali force loyal to it

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11 Even the recently appointed US Envoy to Somalia told the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington DC that there is no confidence in the TFG.

12 Nearly all observers consider the reconciliation conference recently held in Mogadishu to have been a farce.

13 Abdullahi Yusuf has already brought his clan militias to Mogadishu to help enforce his dictates.

14 This division is reminiscent of the Mogadishu riots in 1948 when the Somali Youth League (SYL), the nationalist party opposed the return of Italian rule to Somalia. A small group of Somalis supported the Italian agenda.

and the TFG leaders and not to the country, and which will make the UN-sponsored African force redundant. Thus, the timing, speed, and the quality of the deployed African force is of the essence. Unfortunately it seems unlikely that such operation will occur in a timely fashion given that those who pushed through the Security Council resolution, the American government in particular, are not in a hurry to do so anymore.<sup>15</sup>

Lastly, since an African force has failed to materialize, a way must be found to reduce the oppressive effects of the invasion in the short run. A possible instrument for such a program could be to station internationally sanctioned human and civil rights monitors in Mogadishu and major population areas and for the international community to demand that Ethiopian troops leave all these centers. These monitors will regularly report to the UN and the international press on the activities of the occupying force and their allies that infringe on human rights and that impede the population's right to self-organize politically in order to actively partake in the affairs of their country. After 10 months of Ethiopian occupation, dreadful human rights abuses, and the displacement of half a million people, the international community is not moved to act.

Whatever the immediate outcome of the Ethiopian occupation of Somalia and the installation of the TFG in Mogadishu might be, it is clear that politics in Somalia will not be the same again. The probable impacts of the invasion were noted earlier, but the essay has not indicated what legacy, if any, the Courts left behind during their limited tenure in power. Among other things, the Courts will be remembered for the strategic lapses they made. Those mistakes exacerbated the crisis because they were unapprised about the dangers Somalia faced from the region and beyond, and failed to heed the advice of Somalis and non-Somalis who sought to help them safely navigate through the international system in order to serve the wellbeing of the Somali people. Despite these blunders they made five critical contributions to Somali history which could have enduring effects. First, they demonstrated that civic life can be rejuvenated using fundamental Islamic principles of justice and inclusive community. Second, the efforts of the courts confirmed that the clanist political project deployed by sectarian entrepreneurs and its damaging social and political effects need not be considered as second nature to Somalis, and that an Islamic/civic alternative is possible. Third, the reign of the courts proved that an inclusive political project can attract a large following of citizens and this confirmed the redundancy of the need to bring in an expensive or a hostile external force to restore peace and disarm the population. Fourth, the Courts' autonomy from Ethiopia and other states inspired the Somali people and signaled that Somali sovereignty and independent spirit may be deeply rusted but far from comatose and what is lacking to reenergize it are leaders with integrity. Fifth, the Courts' immediate engagement with desperately needed public service such as refuse removal from the city, the rehabilitation and accountable management of the port and airport, return of looted properties to their rightful owners, and the public's approval of these deeds indicate the population's wish for a

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<sup>15</sup> It is reported that the EU is exceptionally unhappy about the way in which the US endorsed the Ethiopian invasion and is consequently holding back its funds for supporting the AU force.

responsible government.<sup>16</sup> Finally, the Courts have led the resistance to the Ethiopian occupation and through this continue to attract a lot of support from the population not only in the Benadir region but across the Somali world.

Finally, American policy and the Ethiopian regime who vilify Muslim movements in the region that are not subordinated to their dictates<sup>17</sup> were euphoric in early 2007 after the defeat of the Union of Islamic Courts, but their jubilation was momentary as a national resistance movement remerged. Unlike the short-lived tenure of the Courts one thing is certain, that Islam inspired political movements will boomerang and shall become the central force in Somali politics for a long time to come. Given recent history of the relationship between nationalist and Islamic movements, it will be ironic that Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia and America's support for it has inadvertently enhanced the appeal of Islam as the major political force in the country in the near future!

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16 Recent remarks by the deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior of the TFG indicate how irresponsible the TFG is. He told the BBC Somali Service that Ethiopia and Somalia will soon abolish their boundary and share the same passport as the two countries are brotherly states. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/somali/index.shtml>. January 2, 2007. Apparently the occupation is a sign of fraternal relations in the minds of significant number of TFG leaders. One of the key leaders of the TFG noted that he does not want to hear suggestions from the public regarding how to move the peace forward, but to simply support the agenda he brought with him.

17 The official Islamic Council of Ethiopia was instructed by the authorities to issue a declaration in support of the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia. Contacts in the Council told the author that the government literally wrote the declaration which the Council was asked to issue under thinly veiled threat. This method of getting consent is part of the standard operating procedure of the TPLF regime. The author witnessed this type of operation first hand when he was a Fulbright researcher in the country in 1999.

